

A Note on the Origin of the Land-Dayak Villages of
Sentah and Quop.

SENTAH.

Sentah is a name applied by Malays to a village of Land-Dayaks living on *S'buran* hill not far from Kuching. The Dayaks of that village call themselves *S'buran* in consequence. They settled there over seventy years ago (possibly a hundred), having come from *Segun*, up the left-hand branch of the Sarawak River. The *Segun* settlement was formed by a removal from *Tanjong Mekabuh* (or *Tanjong Bunoir*) and that settlement was formed by an excursion of Dayaks from *Sekung*, on the borders of Dutch territory not far from Mt. Penrissen at the head-waters of the Sarawak River. The story goes that two brothers were in charge of *Sekung*, but owing to a serious quarrel the tribe divided and followed one brother up the Sadong River.

It seems impossible to fix any dates to these removals, but if we give each settlement the same length of life as the present one at *Sentah*, we get the excursion from *Sekung* taking place about 200 years ago or more.

A suggested derivation of the word "*Sentah*" is the Malay word "'ntah" meaning "don't know" or "don't understand." Thus Malays visiting these people at *S'buran* and probably being quite unable to understand a single word of their language, kept repeating the words "I don't understand"; and probably this was the first and only Malay word the *S'buran* people learnt, so that when other Malays came, this was their reply "'ntah," hence the nickname "*Sentah*."

The *Sentah* people relate that the foot of *S'buran* hill (at a spot called *Iring*) was occupied by the *B'Lundu* people before they themselves arrived; and remains of their house are still to be seen on this place. The *B'Lundu* were so-called by the *Sentah* people because they went from *Sentah* to settle at *Lundu*, not because they came from *Lundu*, as one would guess. Where they came from before *Sentah* is not known apparently, nor is it known under what name they lived at *Sentah* before their migration to *Lundu*. These *B'Lundu* are true Land-Dayaks and not the Sibuya of Sea-Dayak stock who form the larger part of the inhabitants of *Lundu* nowadays. The prefix *B'* means "People of";

thus "B'Sadong" means the people living at the foot of Sadong Hill, in this case the *Bukar* people (i.e., of *Lanchang*, *Mungo Babi*, etc.), who call themselves "B'Sadong" or "orang Bukar."

In contradistinction to the *Dayak B'Lundu* who dropped their old name (whatever it was) and became known by the name of the place *to which* they migrated, we get the Serin Land-Dayaks, who moved many years ago from the Serin River in Upper Sarawak across country to the Samarahan River, retaining that name by which they were known in the place *from which* they migrated.

Sentah does not seem to have given rise to any other large settlements except that of *Quop*; though two small houses must be mentioned of quite recent origin; both near *Sentah*; these are *S'krak*, founded about 10 years ago, and *Batu*. Both of these were formed by small parties going out from *Sentah* to the farming-ground and making temporary houses which afterwards became permanent residences.

QUOP.

The *Quop* people ("Kuab" in *Dayak*, meaning unknown) owe their origin to a party of *Dayaks* from *Sentah* who went to *Quop Hill* (about 2 hours' walk) to farm, intending to return to *Sentah* after the paddy season. Sir James Brooke however ordered them to make a settlement there on *Quop Hill*. This they were afraid to do because of the *Malays* near by who seem to have been hostile and oppressive. Accordingly the *Rajah* sent up other *Malays* of a friendly disposition and thereupon these *Sentah Dyaks* built their house on *Quop Hill*.

Si Jugur* was appointed *Orang Kaya* and *Mapamoië* made *Temonggong*. Disaster overtook the new settlement in the shape of cholera and small-pox which terribly reduced their numbers. Disheartened by this, the survivors wanted to return to *Sentah*, but under the orders of Mr. Grant of the *Sarawak Government*

*The prefix "Si" may be translated as "Mr.", and is possibly the same as "Che'" in common use in the Malay Peninsula for the respectful designation of a person. It is curious, however, that the prefix "Si" is also used in that part, but more as a term of contempt or familiarity, according to Wilkinson's Malay-English Dictionary.